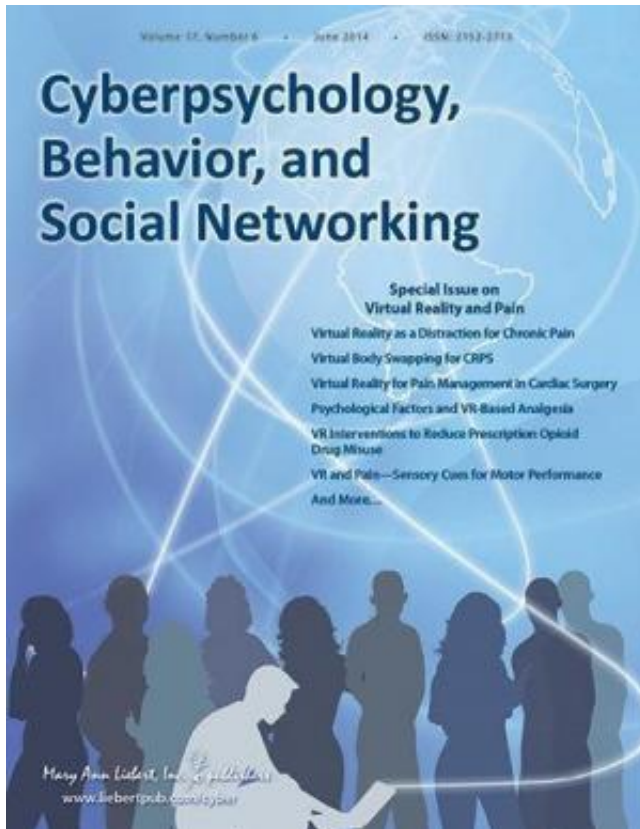


Can virtual reality therapy help alleviate chronic pain?

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Chronic pain due to disease or injury is common, and even prescription pain medications cannot provide acceptable pain relief for many individuals. Virtual reality as a means of distraction, inducing positive emotions, or creating the perception of "swapping" a limb or bodily area affected by chronic pain in a virtual environment can be a powerful therapeutic tool, as described in several articles in [Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking](#).

Editor-in-Chief Brenda K. Wiederhold, PhD, MBA, BCB, BCN and coauthors Kenneth Gao, Camelia Sulea, MD, and Mark Wiederhold, MD, PhD, FACP from the Virtual Reality Medical Institute, Brussels,

Belgium and Virtual Reality Medical Center, San Diego, CA, created pleasant virtual experiences that patients could navigate through in simulated worlds to distract them from pain. They report both the patients' subjective ratings of relief and how those compared to physiological measurements to assess pain responses in the article "[Virtual Reality as a Distraction Technique in Chronic Pain Patients](#)".

In "[Application of Virtual Body Swapping to Patients with Complex Regional Pain Syndrome: A Pilot Study](#)," Bomyi Jeon and coauthors from Korea evaluated the effectiveness of virtual body swapping therapy in improving pain intensity and "body perception disturbance" in patients with Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, a chronic progressive disease characterized by severe pain and disturbed body perception.

Rocio Herrero, PhD and a team of researchers from Spain report significant improvement in multiple factors affecting quality of life for patients with fibromyalgia syndrome, a [chronic musculoskeletal pain](#) condition. They describe their therapeutic approach in the article "[Virtual Reality for the Induction of Positive Emotions in the Treatment of Fibromyalgia: A Pilot Study over Acceptability, Satisfaction, and the Effect of Virtual Reality on Mood](#)".

"Studies have shown that VR can be an effective adjunct for both chronic and acute pain conditions," says Dr. Wiederhold. "Future possibilities for VR's use in pain conditions may include such diverse groups as military personnel, space exploration teams, and our ever increasing elderly population."

More information: The articles are available free on the [Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking](#) website.

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